



AIRCRAFT OWNERS AND PILOTS ASSOCIATION

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April 30, 2007

Mr. Michael A. Tarr
Manager, Operations
Alaska Flight Services Information Area Group
Federal Aviation Administration
222 West 7th Avenue, #14
Anchorage, AK 99513-7587

RE: Aeronautical Study 06-AAL-50NR

Dear Mr. Tarr:

On behalf of more than 410,000 members, the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) has reviewed the proposed discontinuance of the U.S. Air Force owned infrastructure at the Galena, Alaska airport (PAGA), which includes an Instrument Landing System (ILS), automated weather observation system (AWOS), approach lighting system, visual approach slope indicator (VASI) and other equipment. AOPA opposes the discontinuances, which impacts both Visual Flight Rules (VFR) and Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) operations at PAGA and reduces the quality of weather products in Northern Alaska.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) proposal reduces safety and eliminates precision approach access for air mobility, on-time delivery of goods, and essential or critical services for Galena and many surrounding villages. Galena's airport is a miniature passenger and freight distribution hub for the villages of Nulato, Kaltag, Koyukuk, Huslia, Ruby and Hughes. Clearly the loss of precision approaches at PAGA is a negative impact at a regional level.

Galena also serves as a fuel stop for general aviation aircraft flying between Fairbanks and Nome, and the ILS gives pilots a precision approach alternative. River fog generates low-IFR conditions and the ILS provides the necessary precision approach access.

For years, the FAA has encouraged pilots to use glide slope indicators, including both ILS glide slopes and VASI systems on every landing. When pilots follow this advice, they drastically reduce the risk of controlled flight into terrain accidents. Retaining these visual and instrument approach path navigation systems ensure safety is maintained.

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Similar to AOPA comments in March about loosing an AWOS at PABA, the AWOS at Galena is a benefit to a much larger area of Alaska. Without the AWOS weather observations the entire region suffers because there are so few reporting stations. In order to validate the accuracy of weather forecasts, the AWOS observations are necessary. Loss of even a single weather reporting station is critical. Even VFR operators count on the Galena weather for operational decision-making. Currently, the National Weather Service issues a Terminal Area Forecast for Galena. Without either instrument approaches or weather, AOPA is concerned that the National Weather Service will cancel that forecast. The loss of this weather station also degrades the quality of the Area Forecast that pilots use to plan flights over the entire region.

Based on the information provided above, AOPA urges the FAA to ensure that the infrastructure remains available for use by pilots while they identify alternate strategies in coordination with Alaskan aviation users. AOPA supports changes in the levels of service in Alaska, but our support is focused on improving and adding services, not removing them. Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this proposal. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 301.695.2211.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Randy Kenagy', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Randy Kenagy
Sr. Director Strategic Planning
Government Affairs